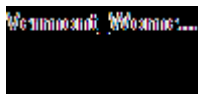


Talbert, Lilly

From: Talbert, Lilly
Sent: Friday, January 11, 2013 12:15 PM
To: Talbert, Lilly
Subject: VCW VIEW: Vermont Commission on Women news and report



(Montpelier) - Many Vermont legislators kicked off their first day of the session on Wednesday at a luncheon celebrating advances women have made in Vermont. The luncheon kicks off each biennium and is sponsored by the Vermont Commission on Women's Education and Research Foundation.

The lunch at Capitol Plaza Hotel featured an address from Governor Shumlin, as well as a quiz with questions like, "what is the current gender wage gap in Vermont?" and "What is the percentage of women serving in the Vermont legislature?"

Governor Shumlin spoke about Vermont's gender wage gap, currently at 83%, "That should be a huge priority for all of us as we talk about education and equity. We have a lot of other important work to do as well. So I just came down here to say, thank you for the work you're doing, we're proud of you, you're incredibly important to the progress that we've made. We've got more progress to make, and let's make it together."

A report titled, "Women in Public Life" issued at the event featured a historical look at women lawmakers in Vermont and also women serving on Vermont Boards and Commissions. Vermont ranks second in the nation for the percentage of women serving in the legislature, with a total of 40.6%. Colorado is first at 42%. Serving on a boards or commissions is often a stepping stone to elected office, and where many Vermonters first learn about running and participating in public meetings. Currently, of Vermont's 227 boards and commissions, 95 (or 42%) are gender balanced.

The new Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women, Cary Brown cited examples where gains had been made on the national level. "Last year saw the 40th anniversary of Title IX, which increased women's and girls' participation in school sports radically. In 1972, there were about 295,000 girls participating in school sports, compared to 3.67 million boys. Almost 40 years later the number of girls had risen to 3.2 million, with boys at 4.5 million. Also last year we saw the 20th anniversary of the Vermont Parental and Family Leave Act, and this year we'll mark the 20th anniversary of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, both of which guarantee many women, as well as men, the ability to take time off to care for a new baby or a family member without the fear of losing their job or all their benefits."

While celebrating these protections and advancements, Ms. Brown cited the same examples, speaking about work yet to be done and referring to the Commission's agenda, "Title IX also required that women and girls be given equal opportunities to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math fields, but we have not seen anywhere near the same rise in participation there as we have in sports. There are still barriers in the form of stereotyping, bias, and lack of access to resources that need to be addressed. This is one of the reasons the Vermont Commission on Women partners with leadership programs such as Women Can Do, Girls State, and the Girl Scouts to help support Vermont girls'

access to their full range of educational options. And while many women are taking advantage of the opportunity to take time off from work to care for their families under the protection of Vermont and federal law, for too many of them this is a lost opportunity because they can't afford to take the time off unpaid. This is why we've worked with the Attorney General's office and a number of other groups to develop a proposal for a study committee to consider the feasibility of a paid family leave system."

Ms. Brown closed the event with a reminder that the Commission continues to partner with policy makers, "... as we work together toward a world in which everyone's strengths are valued, everyone has a place at the table, and no one is denied opportunities because of their sex."

The Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) is a non-partisan state agency dedicated to legislative, economic, social, and political fairness. Launched in 1964 by a call to action from President Kennedy, VCW is charged with reducing discrimination and encouraging opportunities for women. Sixteen volunteer commissioners and representatives from organizations concerned with women's issues guide the VCW's public education, coalition building, and advocacy efforts. VCW offers many services to the public, including a toll-free information and referral service at 1-800-881-156 and many publications, including the latest: The Legal Rights of Women in Vermont. For more information, visit www.women.vermont.gov.